



Liz Terhaar, Columbia Riverkeeper, 541.387.3030, liz@columbiariverkeeper.org
Tina Posterli, Waterkeeper Alliance, [212.747.0622 ext.113](tel:212.747.0622), tposterli@waterkeeper.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER CHALLENGES GRAND COULEE DAM TO END UNCONTROLLED OIL POLLUTION

Lawsuit Against U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Aims to Slash Toxic Pollution from the Pacific Northwest's Largest Dam

June 29, 2016, (Portland, Ore.)—Today Columbia Riverkeeper filed a [lawsuit](#) against the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation designed to end uncontrolled toxic oil pollution from Grand Coulee, finally bringing one of the nation's biggest dams into compliance with the Clean Water Act. Grand Coulee has leaked oil into the Columbia for over 70 years—endangering public health and threatening fish and wildlife.

"This lawsuit will end unchecked oil pollution from Grand Coulee Dam," stated Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director of Columbia Riverkeeper. "For the first time in its long history, Grand Coulee Dam must reduce toxic pollution, switch to eco-friendly oils, and disclose oil discharges to the public, if we are successful."

In 2014, Columbia Riverkeeper settled a similar lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers aimed at oil pollution from eight dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers. The groundbreaking settlement ended decades of unregulated oil pollution and drew national and international attention, with the *New York Times* describing the settlement as having "national implications" and the *Wall Street Journal* describing it as "historic."

The Grand Coulee lawsuit filed today will push the Bureau of Reclamation to join its federal partners at the Corps to replace toxic oils at Grand Coulee with eco-friendly lubricants. For the first time in American history, the Corps is testing eco-friendly oils in large hydroelectric dams, as required by Riverkeeper's 2014 settlement. If the tests are successful, the Corps must switch to eco-friendly oil in eight of America's largest dams: Bonneville, The Dalles, McNary, Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite.

"The Grand Coulee Dam lawsuit is the next phase in the work to protect clean water and eliminate toxic pollution from dams," stated Marc Yaggi, Executive Director of the Waterkeeper Alliance. "When the federal government fails to act to protect clean water, Columbia Riverkeeper is there to hold them accountable."

This year is also the 75th anniversary of Woody Guthrie's iconic song "Roll On Columbia," which calls the Grand Coulee Dam "*the mightiest thing ever built by a man.*" Today, it is time to modernize and control Grand Coulee's toxic pollution.

Columbia Riverkeeper is a nonprofit organization working to protect and restore the Columbia River and all life connected to it. Columbia Riverkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world's fastest growing environmental movement, uniting more than 290 Waterkeeper organizations around the world and focusing citizen action on issues that affect our waterways, from pollution to climate change. Kampmeier & Knutsen, PLLC, and Columbia Riverkeeper staff attorneys, Lauren Goldberg and Miles Johnson, represent Riverkeeper in this action.

Legal documents, including the complaint filed with the court today, are available [here](#).

Additional Resources:

- [Summary of the Corps Testing of Eco-Friendly Oils](#)
- [PowerPoint by the Corps that Explains the 2014 Settlement](#)

###

About Columbia Riverkeeper

Columbia Riverkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Representing over 10,000 members and supporters, Columbia Riverkeeper works to restore a Columbia River where people can safely eat the fish they catch, and where children can swim without fear of toxic exposure. For more information go to columbiariverkeeper.org.

About Waterkeeper Alliance

Waterkeeper Alliance is a global movement uniting over 290 Waterkeeper organizations around the world and focusing citizen advocacy on issues that affect our waterways, from pollution to climate change. Waterkeepers patrol and protect more than 2.3 million square miles of rivers, streams and coastlines in the Americas, Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa. For more information please visit: www.waterkeeper.org.